

# 2

Export Certification  
Manual

## Procedures

### *Preparation*

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#### Introduction

The information presented in the *Procedures* chapter, *Preparation* section, covers topics that Authorized Certification Officials (ACOs) and Export Certification Specialists (ECSs) are required to know before working through the procedures to inspect and to certify plants and plant products offered for export certification. Topics include the basic

policy for export certification, Export Certification Project (EXCERPT), roles and responsibilities, contact protocol, and an overview of the general guidelines and special procedures that support export certification.

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## Basic Policy

Although foreign countries have established plant quarantine regulations which U.S. exporters of U.S. agricultural products are required to meet, the United States **does not** require phytosanitary export certification of plants or plant products prior to export. However, if requested by U.S. exporters, the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA-APHIS-PPQ) provides this service. USDA-APHIS-PPQ will assist U.S. exporters with eligible plants and plant products in meeting the plant quarantine import requirements of foreign countries.

As part of this service, USDA-APHIS-PPQ's responsibility includes the following:

- ◆ Maintain current information on the plant quarantine import requirements of foreign countries
- ◆ Analyze the information, prepare summaries of the import requirements, and make the summaries available to Federal, State, and county ACOs and other interested parties
- ◆ Inspect domestic plants and plant products offered for export
- ◆ Certify those shipments that meet the import requirements of the foreign country
- ◆ Monitor the issuance of Federal plant export certificates to ensure accuracy
- ◆ Assist in certifying plants or plant products of foreign origin that have been legally imported into the United States and are being re-exported
- ◆ When possible, assist U.S. exporters if their **certified** shipments are held at destination, and advise U.S. exporters with shipments on hold that were **not** certified
- ◆ Monitor other program activities to ensure credibility of the phytosanitary export certification program
- ◆ Ensure that **only** authorized inspectors and ACOs inspect and certify the phytosanitary conditions of plants and plant products offered for export

## Export Certification Project

The Export Certification Project (EXCERPT) is a database that supports USDA-APHIS-PPQ's phytosanitary export certification program by housing the summaries of import requirements of foreign countries. EXCERPT provides the capability to enter, store, manage, and retrieve export summary information. This information can be retrieved by PPQ employees, State and county cooperators, and other authorized users.

To facilitate the export of plants and plant products, ACOs use the *Procedures* chapter of this manual along with EXCERPT.

Export Services is the staff within USDA-APHIS-PPQ that is responsible for overseeing the cooperative agreement and for the information in EXCERPT.

Under PPQ's cooperative agreement with the Center for Environmental and Regulatory Information Systems (CERIS) of Purdue University, CERIS supports EXCERPT in the following areas:

- ◆ Computer services (hardware and software)
- ◆ Database management systems administration
- ◆ Development and operations
- ◆ Operation of the EXCERPT hotline
- ◆ On-line help

EXCERPT provides the following (as listed on the Home Page):

- ◆ Messages and alerts from PPQ's Export Services
- ◆ Export summaries of the plant import requirements of foreign countries
- ◆ Record of recent changes to export summaries
- ◆ Processed products (list of eligible processed products)
- ◆ Ineligible commodities (list of ineligible processed products)
- ◆ Endangered species
- ◆ Designated CITES ports for plants (by State)
- ◆ Phytosanitary notes
- ◆ List of Export Certification Specialists (ECSs) and local PPQ contacts
- ◆ Keyword search of export summaries
- ◆ Change password

- ◆ Help using EXCERPT
- ◆ EXCERPT subscription and use fees (for public use **only**)
- ◆ Link to GRIN (Germplasm Resources Information Network) database (source for scientific and common names)
- ◆ On-line *Export Certification Manual*

For further information about EXCERPT, contact the EXCERPT program manager at the following address:

EXCERPT Program Manager  
USDA-APHIS-PPQ-Export Services  
4700 River Road, Unit 140  
Riverdale, Maryland 20737  
FAX: 301-734-3249  
Phone: 301-734-8537

### Access EXCERPT

Access EXCERPT through an Internet web browser at the following web site address:

<<http://excerpt.ceris.purdue.edu>>

In addition to accessing EXCERPT via the web site, dial-up access via modem is available at 1-800-435-9994.

You **must** have an active account in order to login to EXCERPT regardless of how you access the system. If you **do not** have an active account, see [Request an EXCERPT Account](#) on page 2-1-6.

### Alternative Sources to EXCERPT

In the event of an emergency (computer system fails or is shutdown and **cannot** be accessed), EXCERPT users are instructed to access alternative sources to EXCERPT in the following sequence:

1. Primary alternate web site as follows:

<<http://minorleague.ceris.purdue.edu>>

Export Services will communicate (in advance) when the primary alternative source is activated and **cannot** be used at any other time.

2. Secondary alternate web site as follows:

<<http://www.netlink-tech.com/ceris>>

CERIS will send an e-mail message when the secondary alternative source is activated.

### 3. *EXCERPT Emergency Response Plan*

Export Services will send an e-mail message when the last alternative source is activated and is utilized until EXCERPT is returned to online status. *EXCERPT Emergency Response Plan* outlines specific instruction for using EXCERPT and establishes specific responsibilities for selected emergency response locations (those delegated to provide information from export summaries while the system is shutdown). On a regular basis (at least monthly), these response locations receive from CERIS backup CD-ROMs that contain all the export summaries. During the emergency, ACOs contact the response locations to get EXCERPT information and inquiries should be limited to those requiring immediate attention. See *Appendix A, EXCERPT Emergency Response Plan* on page A-1-1 for a list of the response locations.

### Phytosanitary Notes

One of important features of EXCERPT that warrants mentioning in this manual are Phytosanitary Notes (PNs). PNs contain the most timely information about the exportation of plants and plant products. PNs cover such topics as the following:

- ◆ Interpretations of import requirements pertaining to specific countries and import requirements of a foreign country for which there is **no** export summary (These PNs are organized like an entry under Product Requirements in an export summary) (countries are listed alphabetically, followed by the plant name and then plant product such as cut flower, fruit, grain, seed, wood)
- ◆ New import requirements pertaining to a specific country while Export Services prepares an updated export summary
- ◆ Special notes providing administrative guidance about nationwide export certification issues and about issuing Federal plant export certificates (These PNs may be specific to a country)
- ◆ Foreign country complaints, which is a summary of foreign country notifications of non-compliance (their dissatisfaction with the export certification of U.S. agricultural products)
- ◆ Summary of Export Services's annual review of selected Federal plant export certificates

**Only** current PNs are maintained in EXCERPT. Superseded PNs are omitted from the list because the information either has expired or has been incorporated into the ECM or the applicable export summary.

See [Figure 2-1-1](#) for a list of PNs (as of August 23, 2004); see EXCERPT for the most current list of PNs.

PN #0967 08/05/04 Accreditation of non government entities
PN #0966 07/28/04 Official samples for phytosanitary certification purposes
PN #0965 07/07/04 Sampling & inspection procedures for seed
PN #0964 06/25/04 India (multiple topics)
PN #0963 06/01/04 Countries that <b>must</b> be entered into EXCERPT
PN #0960 03/12/04 India, Import permits with methyl bromide
PN #0959 03/09/04 Western flower thrips host material to Taiwan
PN #0958 02/05/04 Export requirements, wood packing material
PN #0957 02/05/04 Phosphine fumigation
PN #0952 06/19/03 Report on non-compliance notifications
PN #0950 01/09/03 Shipping dates and procedures
PN #0938 12/21/01 Inspection procedures for onions & garlic
PN #0803 05/18/95 Do not certify grain as to disease freedom
PN #0792 02/08/95 Fumigation and inspection procedures
PN #0332 05/17/90 Potpourri (dry petals & species) is certifiable

**FIGURE 2-1-1: List of Phytosanitary Notes (PNs) (as of July 12, 2004)**

### Request an EXCERPT Account

In order to access the EXCERPT database, you **must** have an established account. The EXCERPT Advisory Committee (EAC) is the entity that receives and processes all requests to access EXCERPT. Each EAC member is responsible for ensuring that contact information for accounts and usage needs remain current.

If you are **not** an ACO (e.g., private entity or another Federal or State government agency such as the Food and Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency), then you may establish an account by subscribing to EXCERPT. For information about subscribing to the database, contact Joe Hegarty, CERIS of Purdue University, at 1-765-494-4967 or e-mail <[jhegarty@ceris.purdue.edu](mailto:jhegarty@ceris.purdue.edu)>.

If you are an ACO, use [Table 2-1-1 on page 2-1-7](#) to identify the appropriate EAC member your supervisor may contact to establish an EXCERPT account, which will enable you to access the EXCERPT database.

**TABLE 2-1-1: List of Supervisory Contacts to Request an EXCERPT Account**

If you are a:	And you are located in:	Then have your supervisor contact:
PPQ Officer	PPQ's Eastern Region	Laney Campbell 919-855-7314 <laney.e.campbell@aphis.usda.gov>
	PPQ's Western Region States Alaska      Hawaii      New Mexico Arizona      Idaho      Oregon California      Montana      Utah Colorado      Nevada      Washington	Mitch Nelson 503-326-2814 <mitchell.g.nelson@aphis.usda.gov>
	PPQ's Western Region States Arkansas      Missouri      Oklahoma Iowa      Nebraska      South Dakota Kansas      North Dakota      Texas Louisiana	Maria Perez 281-443-2063 <maria.d.perez@aphis.usda.gov>
State cooperator	Southern Plant Board States Alabama      Mississippi      South Carolina Arkansas      North Carolina      Tennessee Florida      Oklahoma      Texas Georgia      Puerto Rico      Virginia Louisiana	Serena Stornaiuolo 407-884-2032 <stornas@doacs.state.fl.us>
	Eastern Plant Board States Connecticut      Massachusetts      Pennsylvania Delaware      New Hampshire      Rhode Island Maine      New Jersey      Vermont Maryland      New York      West Virginia	Matt Travis 410-841-5920 <travisma@mda.state.md.us>
	Western Plant Board States Alaska      Idaho      Oregon Arizona      Montana      Utah California      Nevada      Washington Colorado      New Mexico      Wyoming Hawaii	Casy Estep 916-653-1440 <cestep@cdfa.cd.gov>
	Central Plant Board States Illinois      Minnesota      Ohio Iowa      Missouri      Oklahoma Kansas      Nebraska      South Dakota Kentucky      North Dakota      Wisconsin Michigan	Chuck Stoltenow 515-242-5180 <chuck.stoltenow@idals.state.ia.us>
County cooperator	California ( <b>only</b> )	Casy Estep 916-653-1440 <cestep@cdfa.cd.gov>

### **Symbols for Pests Mentioned in Export Summaries**

**Not** mentioned elsewhere are the symbols used in EXCERPT (export summaries) that indicate known occurrence of pests in the Continental United States. Therefore, to facility the use of export summaries, note that symbols are used in export summary to highlight those pests that are **not** known to occur in the Continental

United States and those pests **uncertain** to occur in the Continental United States. [Table 2-1-2](#) below lists the symbols used to indicate pest status in export summaries.

**TABLE 2-1-2: Identification of Pest Status in Export Summaries**

When there is:	Then the listed harmful organism is:
No symbol next to the harmful organism	<b>Known</b> to occur in the Continental United States
* next to the harmful organism	<b>Not</b> known to occur in the Continental United States
+ next to the harmful organism	<b>Uncertain</b> to occur in the Continental United States

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## Types of Products

The type of product dictates which Federal plant export certificate will be used to certify that product. The following types of products are described for the purposes of export certification:

- ◆ [Domestic Products](#)
- ◆ [Foreign Products](#)
- ◆ [Processed Products](#)
- ◆ [Prohibited Products](#)

### Domestic Products

Domestic products are those plants and unprocessed or unmanufactured plant products grown or produced in the United States, its possessions, and Puerto Rico. PPQ Form 577, Federal Phytosanitary Certificate, is authorized to certify that domestic plants and plant products conform with the phytosanitary regulations of the importing country.

### Foreign Products

Foreign products are those plants and unprocessed or unmanufactured plant products that have officially entered U.S. commerce but were grown or produced in countries **other than** the United States, its possessions, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Foreign products are eligible for PPQ Form 579, Phytosanitary Certificate for Reexport.

Re-export certification can be based on a combination of the following:

- ◆ Original or certified true copy of a foreign phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin

- ◆ Plants or plant products being segregated and their identity maintained while kept under suitable safeguard to prevent the risk of infestation or infection while in the United States
- ◆ Supplemental inspection, treatment, or testing

Foreign products that are prohibited entry by the importing country **cannot** be certified for re-export. Foreign products should meet the import requirements of the importing country; however, those that apparently **do not** meet the import requirements (e.g. growing season or field inspections, virus indexing, freedom from specified pests at the production area, etc.) may be certified for re-export even though the requirements are **not** stated on a foreign phytosanitary certificate. In these cases, final judgment of enterability will be the responsibility of the importing country. An additional declaration may be placed on the re-export certificate to indicate that the shipment met the import requirements of the United States or that the United States **does not** require phytosanitary certification for entry of the products.

Foreign products that are transiting the United States under Customs' bond are **neither** eligible for re-export certification **nor** eligible for processed product certification.

### Processed Products

Processed products are those plant products processed or manufactured to the degree that they are unlikely to harbor injurious pests. PPQ Form 578, Export Certificate, Processed Plant Products, may be issued for **only** those processed products that are listed in EXCERPT as eligible for PPQ Form 578. The intended purpose of the PPQ Form 578 is to assist U.S. exporters whose shipments may be placed in jeopardy if such a document is **not** issued.

Processed products are **not** eligible for certification with PPQ Form 577 or PPQ Form 579 even when the importing country specifically requires a phytosanitary certificate. ACOs **cannot** issue Federal plant export certificates for products that are listed in EXCERPT as **ineligible** processed products. When processed products are **not** eligible for certification, refer the exporter to another agency contact provided in EXCERPT.

### Prohibited Products

Prohibited products are those plants and unprocessed or unmanufactured plant products listed in an export summary as being prohibited entry by the importing country. Prohibited products are **ineligible** for phytosanitary certification unless an import permit or other special authorization is provided from the plant protection organization of the importing country and all conditions of the import permit are met.

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## Roles and Responsibilities

The primary roles related to export certification are listed below followed by the responsibilities outlined for each role:

- ◆ **Authorized Certification Official**
- ◆ **Export Certification Specialist**
- ◆ **Exporter or Shipper**

### Authorized Certification Official

The responsibilities of Authorized Certification Officials (ACOs) include the following:

1. Meet the education, experience, and training requirements to become an ACO (see also *Special Procedures, Accreditation Programs*, **Accreditation of Authorized Certification Officials** on **page 3-1-1**). For State cooperators, the education and experience requirements are described in *Special Procedures, Federal-State Cooperative Program* on **page 3-5-1**.
2. Identify the import requirements of a foreign country for plants or plant products and determine whether they meet the requirements, which involves examining import permits or special authorizations, examining foreign phytosanitary certificates, and reviewing export summaries.
3. Inspect the plants and plant products before issuing a Federal plant export certificate to determine that the plants or plant products meet the import requirements.
4. Provide exporters with necessary information to meet the importing country's requirements when plants or plant products are **not** eligible for certification, are prohibited, or fail inspection.
5. Advise exporters to ship plants and plant products within specific time limits. (For time limits specified by some countries, see *Procedures, Inspection Guidelines*, **Table 2-4-3** on **page 2-4-9**.)
6. Monitor or verify the application of any treatment to prepare the plants or plant products for export. (For details of USDA-APHIS-PPQ policy regarding monitoring treatments, see table footnote for **Table 2-3-9** on **page 2-3-17**.)
7. Verify that the contents of the shipment are what are documented on the Federal plant export certificate. Compare the Federal plant export certificate with any supporting documents (such as inspection certificates, State certificates, or other agency reports) that may help to verify the accuracy of the contents of the shipment and the Federal plant export certificate.

8. Advise exporters, shippers, or brokers as to the status of a shipment. When samples are drawn for laboratory examination or when delays in certifying the shipment occur, then let the exporter or the shipping company know so that the shipment is **not** inadvertently loaded before inspecting and certifying. Once the inspection is completed and the Federal plant export certificate is issued, immediately notify the exporter or the shipping company that loading can begin.
9. Prepare Federal plant export certificates in English, handwritten or type legibly. Some foreign countries will **not** accept Federal plant export certificates with alterations, errors, or erasures. See [\*General Guidelines for Completing Federal Plant Export Certificates\*](#) on page 2-5-6.
10. Forward the record copy of Federal plant export certificates to your supervisor, Export Certification Specialist (ECS), or State Plant Health Director (SPHD). Attach copies of import permits and other documents used for certifying each shipment. Who and when to send copies will be established by the ECS and SPHD. A rule-of-thumb is to gather and send forward copies of issued certificates weekly.
11. For PPQ officers, inspect and certify plants and plant products during normal duty hours and at locations normally traveled to in connection with other work assignments. PPQ managers should use discretion when assigning ACOs to phytosanitary export inspections that involve a significant amount of travel time. When requests for services at remote locations occur, all alternative methods of certification should be explored before PPQ work hours are committed.
12. Maintain accreditation by actively issuing<sup>1</sup> Federal plant export certificates, attending refresher training and successfully passing a renewal test at a minimum of every 3 years. See also *Special Procedures, Accreditation Programs, [Accreditation of Authorized Certification Officials](#)* on page 3-1-1.

### **Export Certification Specialist**

Export Certification Specialists (ECSs) play a vital role in ensuring continuity and quality control of PPQ's phytosanitary export certification program. Their role includes the following responsibilities:

1. Serve as the point of contact and as the expert on phytosanitary issues for all ACOs under their assigned area.

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<sup>1</sup> Issuing Federal plant export certificates within one year of initial accreditation or issuing Federal plant export certificates within two years of initial accreditation or reaccreditation.

2. Serve as technical liaison among local, State, region, and national officials regarding export certification. Be knowledgeable in agricultural production and commodity management practices within assigned areas in order to provide recommendations that enhance export protocols.
3. Review (at least monthly) 5 to 10 percent of all Federal plant export certificates issued by ACOs within their assigned area for compliance with established policy and foreign import requirements. See [Review Guidelines for Federal Plant Export Certificates](#) on [page 2-1-14](#) for documenting major mistakes, giving feedback, and determining when to provide retraining and when to recommend revocation.
4. Investigate issuances of Federal plant export certificates for detained shipments for the purpose of verifying documents, adhering to certification policy and procedures, and conforming with foreign countries' plant import requirements.
5. Inform Export Services<sup>2</sup> of the following situations:
  - A. Import permit requirements differ from export summary requirements. The exporter **must** provide the official documents stating the different requirements. These documents **must** be an import permit, special authorization, or recent correspondence from the plant protection organization of the foreign country, which would take precedence over the information contained in the export summary.
  - B. Issuance of a Federal plant export certificate which may cause embarrassment or financial liability to the USDA or its employees, financial loss to the shipper or industry, or damage the credibility of the phytosanitary export certification program (as part of the review guidelines).
6. Determine the need for, coordinate, and conduct initial training for State and county personnel within assigned areas, and develop and present refresher training for all ACOs within assigned areas following the *Administrative Guide for Export Certification Training*. This training responsibility helps to maintain ACO accreditation, meet the requirements of the NAPPO standards, maintain credibility of the export certificate program, and avoid recurrent errors in issuing Federal plant export certificates.

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<sup>2</sup> Export Services, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 4700 River Road, Unit 140, Riverdale, Maryland 20737; Phone 301-734-8537; FAX 301-734-3249.

7. Ensure that an effective accountability system is established and maintained by State Plant Health Directors and State Plant Regulatory Officials for the Federal plant export certificates issued under assigned areas.
8. Participate in periodic workshops conducted by Export Services.
9. Develop and maintain a broad knowledge base of all exported commodities. Participation in developmental assignments with Export Services and the regional offices is encouraged.
10. Screen and forward a list of State cooperator nominees, along with their qualifications, to Export Services for granting accreditation to issue Federal plant export certificates in conformance with Federal regulations. (See *Special Procedures, Federal-State Cooperative Program* on **page 3-5-1.**)
11. Maintain accreditation records for all ACOs in the nationwide ACO database. Notify Export Services of cooperators who transfer, retire, or otherwise separate from State or county employment.
12. Be guided by the Memorandum(s) of Understanding (MOU) for the Federal-State Cooperative Program, and review the MOU as circumstances warrant (e.g., change in personnel). Notify Export Services of needed changes. If a signed copy of a State's MOU is needed, then contact the USDA-APHIS-PPQ regional office.
13. Keep a current copy of the *Export Certification Manual* and associated materials such as Phytosanitary Notes. Notify USDA-APHIS-PPQ's Manuals Unit of needed changes and updates. (See *Introduction, How to Report Problems With the ECM* on **page 1-1-7.**)
14. Be proficient using EXCERPT and other databases, such as the ACO national database and Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN) database. Notify Export Services of needed changes and updates to the information in EXCERPT. Maintain the emergency response plans for EXCERPT.
15. Conduct field audits involving review of facilities, issued Federal plant export certificates, and ACO records to ensure compliance with Federal regulations, policies and procedures, and with USDA-APHIS-PPQ's obligations to bilateral agreements, protocols, Memorandums of Understanding, and international standards. Identify and document mistakes. (See *Review Guidelines for Federal Plant Export Certificates* on **page 2-1-14** for documenting major mistakes, giving feedback, and determining when to recommend suspension.)
16. Assist Export Services in their periodic audit of issued Federal plant export certificates. Assist national and regional export program officials to identify and to develop required training

guidelines and course work. Assist APHIS headquarters with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Assist State and national Investigative and Enforcement Services staff (USDA-APHIS-IES) and PPQ State and headquarters offices to research and to obtain information related to cases involving the issuance of Federal plant export certificates. Assist regional and national offices to review newly-developed export protocols and work plans for establishing export continuity in the phytosanitary export certification program. Provide input to regional and national export program officials when developing new certification policies and procedures or modifying existing ones.

### **Review Guidelines for Federal Plant Export Certificates**

ECSs are responsible for reviewing Federal plant export certificates and for conducting field audits to ensure compliance with Federal regulations, policies and procedures, foreign import requirements, and USDA-APHIS-PPQ obligations to bilateral agreements, protocols, Memorandums of Understanding, and international standards. These review guidelines are as provided in Section Four of the *ACO Quality Manual* and are provided here to help ECSs perform comprehensive reviews (under optimum operational conditions):

- 1.** Instruct supervisors of ACOs to review weekly copies of issued Federal plant export certificates when operationally feasible. Supervisors should note major mistakes and document corrective actions taken on the certificate copy or an attached sheet.
- 2.** Review (at least monthly) 5 to 10 percent of the copies of issued Federal plant export certificates. If a particular issuing office historically has a high volume of issued certificates or has made frequent mistakes, then a more intensive or frequent review may be necessary.
- 3.** Document **major mistakes**, which include but are **not** limited to the following examples:
  - A.** Certification of a prohibited or ineligible product.
  - B.** Certification of plants or plant products from non-approved field or treatment facilities or failure to include treatment marks on boxes or Federal plant export certificates.
  - C.** Certification of CITES materials at a non-designated CITES port.
  - D.** Failure to follow an established work plan or conditions prescribed in an import permit.
  - E.** Failure to consult EXCERPT or other export job aids.
  - F.** Failure to inspect a shipment or to follow an established inspectional procedure.

- G. Failure to sign Federal plant export certificates.
  - H. Issuance of an improper Federal plant export certificate.
  - I. Missing, incomplete, or incorrect additional declaration (e.g., add an additional declaration **not** required by an import permit, export summary, or the ECM).
4. Give feedback to the issuing office and the State Plant Health Director (SPHD) who has statewide responsibility for export certification. If the issuing ACO is a State or county cooperator, then the SPHD will forward the feedback to the State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO). In turn, the SPRO will give the feedback to the ACO or the ACO's supervisor. (See [Figure 2-1-2 on page 2-1-16](#) for a model letter you can follow to document major mistakes found on Federal plant export certificates. For a fillable version, click [here](#).) Provide a copy of the Federal plant export certificate in question, backup documents, and a brief explanation.



To better facilitate local communications among ECSs, SPHDs, SPROs, and ACOs; ECSs may wish to contact the SPHD to establish or to confirm the proper protocol to follow when giving feedback to SPROs and ACOs who are cooperators, as deemed appropriate by the SPHD.

5. Discuss major mistakes among the ACO, the ACO's supervisor, and SPHD to answer questions or concerns about the error and to prevent recurrences.
6. Document the discussion and any recommended action for the ACO, the ACO's supervisor, and SPHD. Forward a copy to the SPHD and Export Services for information.
7. If an ACO continues to issue Federal plant export certificates with recurring mistakes, then consult with the SPHD and regional export program official (who will notify Export Services) to consider suspending the ACO's accreditation. To determine if the recurring mistakes are deliberate, the regional office will initiate an investigation by Investigative and Enforcement Services.

USDA-APHIS-PPQ's commitment to the ACO accreditation program is to consider suspension if an ACO makes three or more major mistakes during a 12-month period or if an ACO repeats the same major error during a 12-month period after being counseled.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
*[insert name of State Plant Health Director or State Plant Regulatory Official]*

Recently \_\_\_\_\_ certified \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
*(insert name of Authorized Certification Official (ACO)) [name of product] [name of country]*

on Phytosanitary Certificate # \_\_\_\_\_ (attached). This Federal plant export certificate has/has not been reported as rejected by the importing country. The error(s) is/are circled below:

- ☐ Failure to sign the Federal plant export certificate.
- ☐ Certification of a prohibited or ineligible plant or plant product.
- ☐ Failure to follow an established work plan or conditions prescribed in an import permit.
- ☐ Failure to consult Phytosanitary Notes or other export job aids.
- ☐ Missing, incomplete, or incorrect required additional declaration; or recorded an unnecessary addition declaration.
- ☐ Certification of commodities from a non-approved field or treatment facility or failure to include treatment marks on boxes or the Federal plant export certificate.
- ☐ Certification of CITES materials at a non-designated CITES port.
- ☐ Issuance of an improper certificate.
- ☐ Failure to inspect a shipment or to follow an established inspectional procedure.
- ☐ Other (noncompliance with established Federal regulations, policies, procedures, bilateral agreements, protocols, Memorandums of Understanding, and international standards):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Our records indicate that this is the ACO's \_\_\_\_\_ warning this year. Future errors could result in suspending the ACO's accreditation (authority to issue Federal plant export certificates). Please forward to my office a letter explaining the error(s) and what corrective actions will be taken. This notice is intended as a corrective action to ensure the integrity of USDA-APHIS-PPQ's phytosanitary export certification program.

If you have any questions, contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.  
*(insert your phone number)*

\_\_\_\_\_, Export Certification Specialist  
*(Signature of Export Certification Specialist)*

Enclosure

**FIGURE 2-1-2: Model Letter for Documenting Major Mistakes Found on a Federal Plant Export Certificate**

8. Note occasional mistakes that would **not** warrant formal documentation. Examples of occasional mistakes include the following:
  - A. Incorrect lining out blocks
  - B. Failure to complete all blocks
  - C. Recorded incorrect approved country name
  - D. Failure to date the Federal plant export certificate
  - E. Misspelled words
  - F. Recorded unclear abbreviations
9. After completing the review process, either destroy the copies of the Federal plant export certificates or retain them for training purposes as follows:
  - A. Destroy copies by shredding and/or burning (appropriate methods); recycle the copies **only** if the confidentiality of the information can be maintained.
  - B. If the copies are retained for training purposes, then protect the confidentiality of the information.

If a copy of a particular Federal plant export certificate is needed at a later date, then obtain a photocopy from the issuing office.

### **Exporter or Shipper**

The responsibilities of the exporter or shipper<sup>3</sup> include the following:

1. Apply, in writing, for the inspection and certification of plants and plant products offered for export. Federal plant export certificates can be issued at the point of origin, at a port where the shipment will transit, or at the actual port of export. PPQ Form 572, Application for Inspection and Certification of Domestic Plants and Plant Products for Export, can be requested from the nearest ACO office or downloaded from the following web site address:  
  
[<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms>](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms)
2. Contact an Accredited Certification Official (ACO) far enough in advance of the shipping or loading dates. This advance notification provides for reviewing phytosanitary import requirements and sampling, inspecting, testing, and any other activity required to meet those import requirements in advance of the anticipated shipping or loading dates and within any

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<sup>3</sup> The exporter responsibilities are also available as a separate document printed at the end of the ECM or on-line at the following web site address: [<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/manuals>](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/manuals) for the purpose of providing exporters with a list of responsibilities for their information and knowledge.

specified time limits. Exporters **must** be aware of any time limit foreign countries specify for the period between date of inspection or date of issue and shipping date. If specified by a foreign country, then the time limit between inspection and exportation is listed in the export summary under the definition of phytosanitary certificate. If a time limit is **not** specified in the export summary, then the general time limit for inspections is **not** more than 30 days before export.

3. Provide all necessary documentation including import permits, bills of lading, manifests, shipping invoices, foreign phytosanitary certificates, and inspection certificates. The exporter's responsibility is to provide official documents stating import requirements if they differ from those in the receiving country's export summary. Official documents may be an import permit, special authorization, or recent correspondence from the plant protection organization of the foreign country, which takes precedence over the information contained in the export summary.

Exporters are responsible for meeting import requirements which includes providing the proper documents in the proper language. Therefore, official documents **must** be in English. Bilingual information is acceptable as long as one of the languages is English. If an ACO or other capable source **cannot** confidently translate an official document, then be advised that ACOs **cannot** proceed until they have an English translation certified in writing as accurate.



Exporters frequently present letters of credit from their contacts in the foreign country to indicate that plant quarantine regulations have been changed. Letters of credit are strictly fiduciary documents. For the purposes of phytosanitary certification, letters of credit **cannot** be considered official notifications of changes or exceptions to plant quarantine regulations, which **must** come from the plant protection organizations of foreign countries.

4. Make the plants or plant products available for inspection. Shipments **cannot** be inspected on board aircraft or ships, or in the holds of vessels. The plants or plant products **must** be accessible to the ACO so that the official can verify and inspect the material described on the application or partially completed Federal plant export certificate. In addition, other shipping documents should be marked or stamped to prevent the shipment from being loaded before the inspection is conducted. The exporter is further responsible for providing the labor to open and close packages for inspection and for providing adequate facilities to perform the inspection. Such facilities include supplies, equipment, and proper lighting required for an efficient inspection before certification.

5. Provide for any required treatments, reconditioning, or other actions to meet the import requirements of the foreign country.
6. Export **only** those plants or plant products that have been properly inspected and certified under a Federal plant export certificate.
7. Safeguard the certified shipment from infestation between the date the shipment was certified and the actual shipping date, and ensure that the certified shipment departs within the specified time limits of the importing country.
8. Comply with U.S. export control regulations. The Federal government controls the exportation of U.S. goods to all foreign countries. The Department of Commerce is the authority for licensing most items for export. Other Federal agencies such as the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Federal Grain Inspection Service handle the certification for specific products.

For further information, exporters may contact the Office of Export Control, Bureau of International Commerce, Department of Commerce at the following web site address:

<<http://www.trade.gov/td/tic/>>

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## Contact Protocol

There are designated Export Certification Specialists (ECSs) and local PPQ contacts who are responsible for assisting line operations to ensure the credibility of export certification and the quality of Federal plant export certificates. State and county cooperators also are involved in export certification. Because of these reasons and the need to respond quickly to inquiries, follow the contact protocol in **Table 2-1-3 on page 2-1-20** for questions, concerns, and suggestions relating to inspecting and to certifying commodities and to issuing Federal plant export certificates.



When EXCERPT specifically instructs the user to contact Export Services directly, then ACOs may deviate from the contact protocol in **Table 2-1-3**. However, any guidance received from Export Services **must** be communicated to the ACO's Export Certification Specialist.

**TABLE 2-1-3: Contacts for Assistance With Export Certification**

<b>If you are a:</b>	<b>Then your first contact is:</b>	<b>Then your second contact is:</b>	<b>Then your third/last contact is:</b>	<b>Then your fourth/last contact is:</b>	<b>Then your last contact is:</b>
PPQ officer (ACO) in the <b>Eastern</b> Region	Immediate supervisor	Export Certification Specialist <sup>1</sup>	State Plant Health Director	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager <sup>2</sup>	Export Services <sup>3</sup>
PPQ officer (ACO) in the <b>Western</b> Region	Immediate supervisor	Local PPQ contact point <b>or</b> Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None
State cooperator (ACO)	State Plant Regulatory Official	Local PPQ contact point <b>or</b> Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None
County cooperator (ACO)	Immediate supervisor or State cooperator (CDFA)	Local PPQ contact point <b>or</b> Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None
PPQ manager (supervisor, State Plant Health Director, or Officer-in-Charge)	Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None	None
State Plant Regulatory Official	Local PPQ contact point <b>or</b> Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None	None
Local PPQ contact point in the Western region	Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None	None
Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None	None	None
Exporter, broker, grower, or another interested party	Authorized Certification Official	Local PPQ contact point <b>or</b> Export Certification Specialist	Trade Specialist <b>or</b> Regional Program Manager	Export Services	None

1 Access EXCERPT to identify the local PPQ contact point or Export Certification Specialist who serves you.

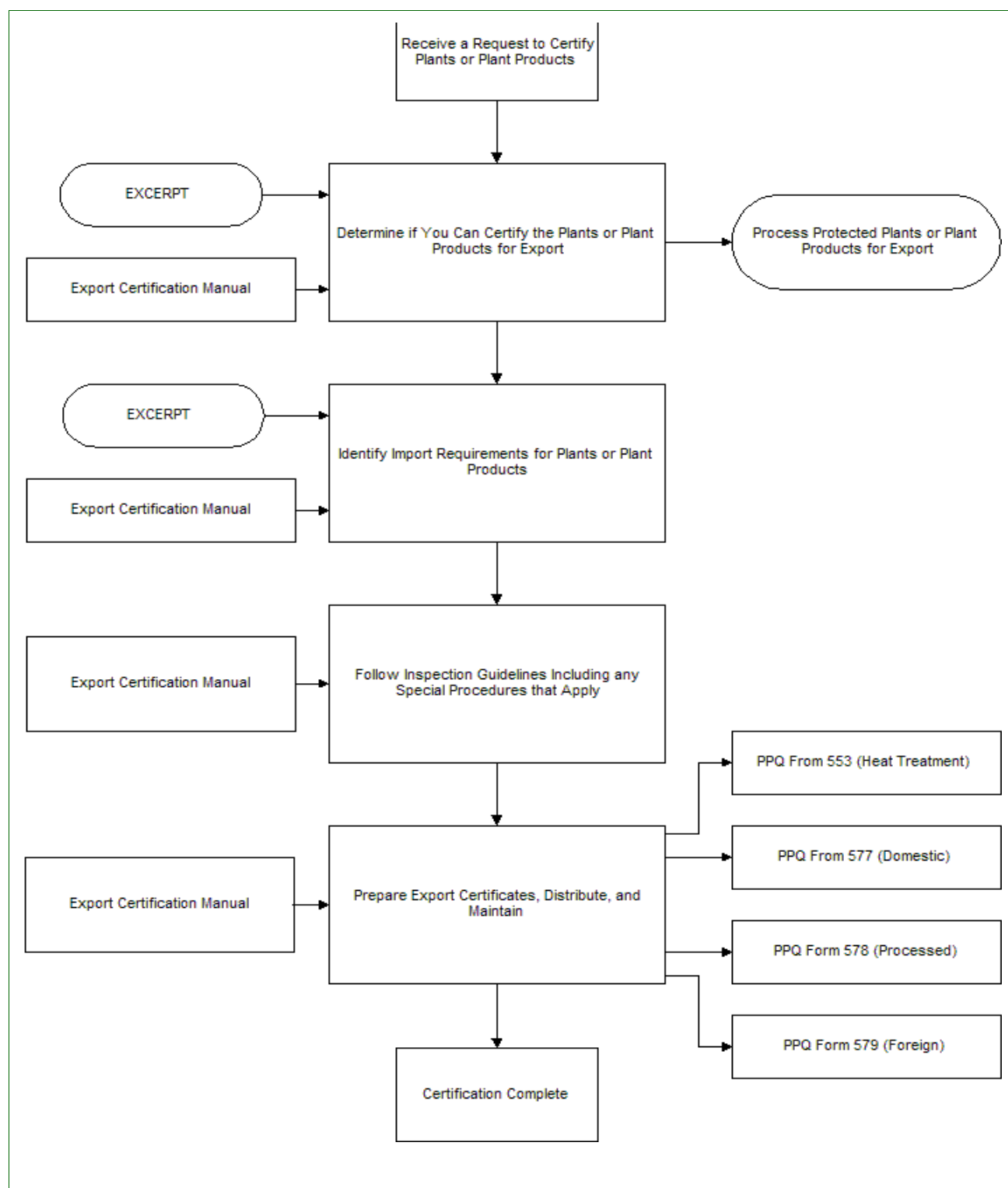
2 Regional Export Program Official, Eastern Region, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Raleigh, North Carolina, phone: 919-855-7314. Regional Export Program Official, Western Region, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Fort Collins, Colorado, phone: 970-494-7500.

3 Export Services, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Riverdale, Maryland, phone: 301-734-8537.

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## Overview of Guidelines for Export Certification

See [Figure 2-1-3](#) for an overview of the tasks for certifying plants and plant products offered for export. The overview is followed by a brief summary of each task that corresponds to the tabbed sections of the *Procedures* chapter. The *Procedures* chapter contains the guidelines that ACOs **must** consider before certifying plants and plant products offered for export.



**FIGURE 2-1-3: Overview of the General Guidelines for Export Certification**

### Determine if You Can Certify the Plant or Plant Product

Before referring to a country's export summary, inspecting a shipment, or completing a Federal plant export certificate, ACOs **must** assess whether they can certify the plants or plant products offered for export. Their assessment is based on what the product is, the product's origin and destination, and the ACO's authority to certify protected plants. (See *Procedures*, **Certification Decision** on page 2-2-1.)

### Identify Import Requirements

ACOs use the export summaries of foreign countries in EXCERPT to identify import requirements that **must** be met in order to issue PPQ Form 577, Federal Phytosanitary Certificate, or PPQ Form 579, Phytosanitary Certificate for Reexport. Also, ACOs use the export summaries to identify prohibitions that would **disallow** them from certifying plants or plant products. Based on whether the plants or plant products can meet the import requirements, ACOs then determine whether they can issue a Federal plant export certificate. (See *Procedures*, **Import Requirements** on page 2-3-1.)

### Follow Inspection Guidelines

The inspection and verification of plants or plant products offered for export determines whether the shipment meets the import requirements of the foreign country. ACOs should review presented import permits or special authorizations and the export summary of the foreign country before beginning inspection to ensure that the shipment meets all requirements. (See *Procedures*, **Inspection Guidelines** on page 2-4-1.)

### Prepare Export Certificates

ACOs prepare the appropriate Federal plant export certificate, as listed and described below (see *Procedures*, **Export Certificates** on page 2-5-1).

- ◆ **PPQ Form 553, China Heat Treatment Certificate**
- ◆ **PPQ Form 577, Federal Phytosanitary Certificate**
- ◆ **PPQ Form 578, Export Certificate, Processed Plant Products**
- ◆ **PPQ Form 579, Phytosanitary Certificate for Reexport**

In addition to the directions for preparing Federal plant export certificates, PPQ officers should see *Special Procedures*, **User Fees** on page 3-11-1, for collecting user fees. State or county cooperators should see local policy about setting and collecting user fees, if applicable.

### **PPQ Form 553, China Heat Treatment Certificate**

PPQ Form 553, Certificate of Heat Treatment, is an official document used to certify coniferous packing materials associated with plants or unprocessed or unmanufactured products exported to the People's Republic of China. The purpose of PPQ Form 553 is to endorse the exporter's statement that the coniferous packing materials have been heat treated in the United States or in Canada.



PPQ Form 553 is **only** for coniferous solid wood packing material destined to the People's Republic of China. This form **cannot** be used for any other country, **except** Hong Kong. Hong Kong addresses are acceptable if the U.S. exporter indicates that the materials exported to Hong Kong will be reshipped to other regions of the People's Republic of China by the Hong Kong consignee.

### **PPQ Form 577, Federal Phytosanitary Certificate**

PPQ Form 577, Federal Phytosanitary Certificate, is an accountable inspection certificate used to certify domestic plants and unprocessed or unmanufactured products for export. The purpose of PPQ Form 577 is to certify that plants or plant products conform with the current phytosanitary regulations of the importing country.

### **PPQ Form 578, Export Certificate, Processed Plant Products**

PPQ Form 578, Export Certificate, Processed Plant Products, is an accountable certificate used to certify specific processed plant products for export. PPQ Form 578 was created by PPQ to fill a void where **no** other USDA agency certification existed or could be adapted. **No** liability is assumed by the USDA or by any of its representatives with respect to this certificate. The purpose of PPQ Form 578 is to assist U.S. exporters whose shipments may be placed in jeopardy if such a document is **not** issued.



Issue PPQ Form 578 **only** for processed products specified in EXCERPT as eligible, regardless of the product's origin.

### **PPQ Form 579, Phytosanitary Certificate for Reexport**

PPQ Form 579, Phytosanitary Certificates for Reexport, is an accountable inspection certificate used to certify foreign origin plants and unprocessed or unmanufactured plant products that have been imported into the United States. The purpose of PPQ Form 579 is to certify that plants or plant products conform with the current phytosanitary regulations of the importing country.



**Do not** issue PPQ Form 579 for foreign processed products.

**Do not** issue PPQ Form 579 for plants or plant products listed in the export summaries as prohibited by the foreign country unless an import permit or special authorization from the plant protection organization of the importing country has been written specifically for the commodity from the originating country.

## Overview of Special Procedures

There are aspects of export certification that have established special procedures and unique programs that provide guidance which supplement the general guidelines. A list of these special procedures and unique programs follow with a brief summary of each (details can be found either in a section of the *Special Procedures* or *Appendix* of this manual):

- ◆ [Accreditation Programs](#)
- ◆ [Compliance Agreements for Compressed, Baled Cotton](#)
- ◆ [Containerized Oak Lumber](#)
- ◆ [Federal-State Cooperative Program](#)
- ◆ [Mail Exports](#)
- ◆ [Mill Certification Programs for Coniferous Sawn Wood](#)
- ◆ [Plants in Growing Media for Export to European Union](#)
- ◆ [Protected Plants](#)
- ◆ [United States-Canada Greenhouse Certification Program](#)
- ◆ [U.S. Export Standards for Seed Potatoes](#)
- ◆ [User Fees](#)

### Accreditation Programs

USDA-APHIS-PPQ has initiated accreditation programs that facilitate the exportation of commodities to foreign markets. Accreditation recognizes consistent levels of competency and confers specific authority. Accrediting trained personnel, organizations, facilities, and processes associated with phytosanitary functions enhances USDA-APHIS-PPQ's ability to protect plant resources and facilitate safe trade. Two accreditation programs initiated by USDA-APHIS-PPQ are the Accreditation of Authorized Certification Officials and the Seed Health Accreditation Program. See *Special Procedures*, [Accreditation Programs](#) on page 3-1-1.

### Compliance Agreements for Compressed, Baled Cotton

PPQ Form 519, Compliance Agreement, is a written record of understanding made among certain industries and USDA to assist in the certification of plants and plant products offered for export. Compliance agreements may be appropriate for establishing procedures to certify compressed, baled cotton. Contact Export Services for approval prior to developing compliance agreements. See *Special Procedures*, [Compliance Agreements for Compressed, Baled Cotton](#) on page 3-2-1.

### Containerized Oak Lumber

The special procedures for **Containerized Oak Lumber** on **page 3-3-1**, provide standardized inspection procedures for certifying containerized oak lumber. The preferred method of certifying lumber for export is to inspect the lumber before containerization. The fact that the lumber is tightly and neatly packed in containers **does not** negate the inspection function.

### Federal-State Cooperative Program

The Federal and State Departments of Agriculture participate in cooperative agreements to more effectively perform phytosanitary export certification. The USDA-APHIS-PPQ phytosanitary export certification program is expanded to enable designated State cooperators to issue Federal plant export certificates at interior points of origin in the United States. Each State plant regulatory agency **must** negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with USDA-APHIS-PPQ in order to be granted the authority to issue Federal plant export certificates. See *Special Procedures*, **Federal-State Cooperative Program** on **page 3-4-1**.

### Mail Exports

The special procedures for **Mail Exports** on **page 3-5-1**, provide the necessary steps for processing plant material that is being exported by mail. When the plant material arrives at a mail facility at the point of export, the ACO can issue a Federal plant export certificate if the mail shipment is found free of plant pests and otherwise meets the import requirements of the foreign country.

### Mill Certification Programs for Coniferous Sawn Wood

USDA-APHIS-PPQ has initiated Memorandums of Understanding with lumber grading agencies to facilitate exports of coniferous sawn wood, an important export from the United States that is highly regulated because of various pests, including the pine wood nematode, *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*. See *Special Procedures*, **Mill Certification Programs for Coniferous Sawn Wood** on **page 3-6-1**.

### Plants in Growing Media for Export to European Union

APHIS' position is that if plants in growing media have sound nursery production procedures, then phytosanitary certification of these plants will provide European Union countries with protection against noxious organisms within the confines of the certifying statement on Federal plant export certificates and will adequately satisfy our obligation to international plant protection. Therefore, see *Special Procedures*, **Plants in Growing Media and Containers to European Union** on **page 3-7-1**, for the procedures established to certify

shipments of plants offered for export to the European Union to ensure that the plants were grown following specific procedures for production and sanitation.

### **Protected Plants**

The special procedures for **Processing Protected Plants** on **page 3-8-1**, provide the necessary steps for processing eligible protected plants or protected plants or plant products moving in violation of CITES or ESA. When applicable, follow these procedures after completing a preliminary assessment beginning at *Procedures, Certification Decision* on **page 2-2-1**.

### **United States-Canada Greenhouse Certification Program**

USDA-APHIS-PPQ and the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to provide for a modified phytosanitary certification program for the expeditious commercial movement of certain low-risk decorative plants between the two countries. See *Special Procedures, United States-Canada Greenhouse Certification Program* on **page 3-9-1**.

### **U.S. Export Standards for Seed Potatoes**

Special procedures have been established for the certification of seed potatoes for export by official State seed potato certification agencies. See *Special Procedures, U.S. Export Standards for Seed Potatoes* on **page 3-10-1**.

### **User Fees**

Special procedures have been written that cover the directions for collecting user fees for Federal plant export certificates and for issuing prepaid certificates. Fees are collected for each Federal plant export certificate issued by PPQ regulatory officials, **except** for the re-export of noncommercial shipments and for Federal plant export certificates that are issued by States or counties regulatory officials. See *Special Procedures, User Fees* on **page 3-11-1**.

